

CSA All Staff FAQ – 4.28.20

COMMUNICATIONS

Question: What are the expectations around typical data collection and reporting requirements during the pandemic? Are any of these projects being delayed due to COVID-related data requests and shifts in daily priorities for staff?

Answer: Data collection has been enhanced to support intentional focus on ongoing practice and impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Ensuring active awareness of performance, outcomes, and outreach to families and children is essential during this time. The following reports continue to be disbursed, are new, or remain available:

- Data warehouse reports
- Book of Business
- Monthly Management Report
- Weekly CSA Director's Report
- ChildStat data for counties involved
- Children's Protective Services ISP Overdue Report
- COVID-19 Director's Weekly Report
- Child Fatality Report
- COVID-19 Social Work Contact Reports (2)
- Relative Safety Report
- Adoption Scorecard

Question: Where can staff find current policy and practice guidance regarding requirements during the pandemic?

Answer: Anyone can access COVID-19 child welfare staff guidance, as well as COVID-19 resources for parents, caregivers, and CCI staff. This information can be found on the MDHHS public website by clicking Adult & Children's Services > Foster Care > [Forms and Publications](#).

Staff with MiSACWIS access can find all Communication Issuances, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, by logging into MiSACWIS and then clicking Help & Training > MiSACWIS Communications Website > Announcements > CSA > Communication Issuance.

Additionally, all staff are encouraged to sign up for the MDHHS Child Welfare News by clicking [here](#).

Question: Where can I find the Educator's Guide referenced during the town hall meeting on April 10?

Answer: Michigan Department of Education (MDE) partnered with MDHHS to develop the [Educator's Guide to Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Children](#). This resource includes information regarding families that may be at greater risk at this time, along with valuable methods for providing additional supports to those at increased risk. This resource

guide is intended to support educators during extended absences of children from classroom settings and can be shared widely with educators, providers and child welfare professionals.

Question: Where can I find the slides from the CSA COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall presentation on April 10?

Answer: The recorded town hall meeting can be accessed using the same link that was used to access the live broadcast. The slides and all hyperlinks included in the slides can be found [here](#). Users with the app will need to join as an Attendee to view the event. Users accessing via the web will automatically be taken to the recording.

Question: What are the current requirements for face-to-face parenting time and sibling visits under the exception granted in Governor Whitmer's Executive Order (EO) 2020-59 extending the Stay Home order through May 15?

Answer: On April 25, Children's Services Agency issued a revised CI 20-032, *Updated Interim Caseworker Guidance for Face to Face Contacts, Parenting Time and Sibling Visits for Children's Services Agency and Child Placing Agencies REVISED*. Under [EO 2020-59](#), face-to-face parenting time is permitted under limited circumstances, and procedures for conducting those visits are outlined in CI 20-032.

Question: Where can we send the shout outs for exceptional staff?

Answer: Shoutouts can be sent to the CSA town hall mailbox, MDHHS-CSA-Townhall@michigan.gov, or you can provide them to your manager for submission. We are excited to recognize the great work being done!

Question: Is CSA planning to continue the town hall meetings after COVID-19?

Answer: Yes, CSA has received positive feedback and we will plan to have quarterly meetings.

COMPUTERS, PRINTING, CELL PHONES, EMAILS, STATE VEHICLES, INTERNET

Question: Can staff seek reimbursement for using their home/personal resources, such as electricity, internet, and phone, in order to work from home?

Answer: No. Staff who are working from home are financially responsible for their home/personal resources used while working from home.

Question: Do we get to deduct things such as internet on our taxes next year, since we are working from home and utilizing our own personal networks?

Answer: Staff should contact a tax professional to discuss whether they may qualify for a tax deduction on their 2020 taxes.

Question: If staff must use their personal phones for state business due to being unable to access their office phones, can they be required to turn over their device to DTMB if requested, or has that requirement been waived due to the pandemic?

Answer: Employees could be asked to turn over their device if they are using their personal devices to send emails and text messages for state business. Using the phone for calls would be unlikely to require surrender of the device, as there is not a digital trail of the conversation.

Question: Will state vehicles, both at county offices and in the motor pool, be cleaned regularly to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission from contaminated surfaces?

Answer: All Field Team Workers (FTWs) have been provided state vehicles and cleaning supplies to help clean surface areas within the vehicle. Local offices will also implement and provide ongoing cleaning guidance for state vehicles in order to assist in ongoing reduction of risk.

Personal disinfecting wipes can be used to wipe frequently touched areas of state vehicles. Frequently touched areas of vehicles include:

- Keys
- Steering wheel
- Gear shift
- Console
- Door handles (interior and exterior)
- Arm rests
- Seatbelt hardware
- Power window/lock buttons
- Seat adjuster buttons/knobs
- Radios

Vehicle and Travel Services (VTS) is not able to provide disinfecting wipes due to limited availability.

Please do not use spray disinfectants inside the vehicles. You may spray it on a cloth to disinfect surfaces.

If you do not feel comfortable using state vehicles, please talk to your supervisor for alternate transportation options.

Additional environmental cleaning and disinfection recommendations are available [online](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For additional information, please visit Michigan.gov/Coronavirus.

Question: Can Zoom be used for state business?

Answer: Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business should be used for state business. DTMB has been working with MDHHS security to gain access for staff to use Zoom. We will provide guidance as soon as it becomes available.

COVID-19

Question: How many MDHHS employees have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Answer: As of April 27, 109 MDHHS employees, including 22 Children's Services Agency (CSA) employees, had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Question: Will local and regional differences be considered when determining how to transition back to our offices and continue serving our clients while keeping employees safe?

Answer: Yes. Guidance will be developed with local and regional needs in mind. When local offices make this transition, further direction will be provided regarding practice and safety.

Question: Are we looking for more immediate implementation of some type of prevention programming to deal with current circumstances and community needs?

Answer: Work is being completed with community partners and various contracted agencies to identify and provide prevention programs to support the clients we serve. As details and services are identified, information will be shared with field staff. All local offices have developed outreach teams who are contacting certain families who were involved with CPS in the previous three months. Staff will provide supportive outreach to these families to discuss any current needs and inform them of resources and services available to them during this time.

Question: Is Centralized Intake rejecting complaints that would normally be assigned due to COVID-19?

Answer: No. Centralized Intake continues to evaluate every intake the same. All decisions are based on policy and the Child Protection Law.

CUSTOMER (CLIENT)

Question: Are caregivers receiving additional support or compensation if a child placed in their home tests positive for COVID-19?

Answer: If a child's diagnosis of COVID-19 significantly changes the medical care required by the foster parent or relative caregiver, the caseworker should reassess the child's Determination of Care (DOC) assessment to determine if an adjustment is warranted.

Question: How should staff complete the pre-screening requirements prior to face-to-face contact with clients who do not have a phone or do not respond to phone contact?

Answer: In the event pre-screening cannot be completed, staff should wear a cloth/surgical face mask and maintain social distancing (6 feet) between themselves and any person with

whom they will have face-to-face contact. If this is at the client's home, the worker should knock on the door and step back to maintain social distancing.

Question: When is drug testing going to resume?

Answer: Due to the Governor's Stay Home Stay Safe order, drug testing locations remain closed. CSA will communicate with staff when facilities are able to reopen.

Question: Should investigators be making face-to-face contact with THC-positive infants when there are no other reported concerns outside of the positive screen?

Answer: Interim policy requires CPS investigators to have in person contact with alleged victims. If such contact cannot be accomplished safely or cannot be accomplished due to restrictions imposed by a health facility (hospital), consult with supervision to determine what is required. Further guidance regarding face-to-face contacts can be found in Communication Issuance 20-032.

Question: Are juvenile justice youth in residential facilities still encouraged to be returned home if possible?

Answer: Yes, workers should continue to review cases with facilities and courts to determine if a youth can be safely returned home or to a community-based placement.

Question: There is a delay in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment due to federal guidelines requiring original signatures on consent documents. Are exceptions being made by federal Health and Human Services (HHS) to waive original signature requirements?

Answer: Providers can take consent to begin treatment via phone and mail the releases of information that need to be signed by the client. It is not necessary for the releases to be signed before beginning treatment; however, providers will be unable to share information with CSA until a signed release has been received.

Question: Are foster parents and relative caregivers eligible for a DOC increase due to additional efforts and expenses incurred while home schooling youth during the school closure?

Answer: Caseworkers should complete a Determination of Care (DOC) re-assessment if caregiver activities have increased. As an example, distance learning plans enacted by local school districts may have caused caregiver education activities to increase. As such, a DOC re-assessment may increase scoring and DOC levels. Caseworkers should *not* reduce the DOC level based on temporary restrictions in caregiver activities due to COVID-19, such as service disruption causing a decreased need for caregiver transportation.

Question: What resources are available for families who are now providing meals that were provided free through children's schools prior to the school closures?

Answer: All children in foster care are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch when attending school for grades K-12. If a child was enrolled in school prior to the Stay Home Stay Safe order and was receiving free/reduced meals, the current caregiver will get a preloaded electronic

benefit transfer (EBT) card. If a child was not signed up for the free or reduced-cost lunch program, the caregiver should contact the school to sign up for the program in order to qualify for any future benefits if they become available.

School districts throughout the state have set up sites to distribute free breakfasts and lunches to students and children ages 0-18, regardless of whether the child(ren) received free or reduced-cost lunch prior to the pandemic. Families should contact their local school district to receive more information on food distribution locations and schedules.

For information about local food banks, dial 211.

FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

Question: Are flexible schedules allowed for staff who are working from home, such as CPS and foster care staff who are unable to use childcare services during the Stay Home Stay Safe order, while providing care and education to their children?

Answer: Flexible work schedules are permitted at the discretion of individual supervisors based on operational need. Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible with staff to promote healthy work-life balance.

Question: When offices reopen, will employees whose children are still home due to the school closures be able to continue working from home?

Answer: The ability to continue to work from home once offices reopen will be at the discretion of individual supervisors. Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible with staff to promote safety and healthy work-life balance.

FIELD TEAM WORKER (FTW) QUESTIONS

Question: Are CPS workers able to volunteer to be a Field Team Worker (FTW)?

Answer: CPS workers should let their local office directors know of their desire to volunteer. At this point, the teams are full, but if members need to be added/replaced, the county director being aware of your desire to volunteer will be beneficial to your county.

Question: How were FTWs selected?

Answer: The basis for selection was determined locally.

Question: Can CPS workers with underlying health issues be required to be an FTW?

Answer: Any FTW who has an underlying health issue or other situation that would be negatively impacted by involvement with the FTW project should discuss their concerns with their supervisor and county director.

Question: Will FTWs rotate to prevent burnout and allow them to devote adequate focus to their assigned caseload?

Answer: Each local office is responsible for determining their FTW assignments. FTWs should not have assigned cases. The hazard pay premium was implemented across multiple

departments within the State of Michigan and requires that those receiving the hazard pay stay in the position that qualified them for the hazard pay.

Question: Why are FTWs, who are at greater risk for contracting COVID-19 due to continued contact with the public, exempt from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) sick leave?

Answer: The FFCRA allows employers to exempt health care professionals and first responders. As defined by the US Department of Labor, such a responder is an “employee who is necessary for the provision of transport, care, health care, comfort, and nutrition of such patients, or whose services are otherwise needed to limit the spread of COVID-19.” The department exempted employees that are critical to the health and welfare of Michigan’s citizens, as having a large degree of absence in this group would be problematic during the COVID-19 response. Subsequently, the Letters of Understanding with unions were negotiated to include only those employees that are exempt. All typical leave credits remain for exempt employees.

Question: Are FTWs responsible for on-call shifts?

Answer: Each local office determined their schedule during regular shift and on-call. All on-call plans must include provisions for face-to-face contacts by FTWs when contact is required.

Question: Will workers who are not FTWs, but were working in the field after the State of Emergency was declared on March 10, receive hazard pay?

Answer: No. The Letters of Understanding negotiated with each of the unions allow only FFCRA exempt employees to receive the COVID-19 hazard premium.

Question: Will foster care workers be designated as FTWs for when a face-to-face contact is needed due to a placement change or safety concern on a foster care case?

Answer: Currently, there are no plans to designate foster care workers as FTWs. All requests for face-to-face contact or replacement, regardless of program type, should be referred to the FTW teams.

Question: Will FTWs receive overtime for on-call work completed after hours in addition to the \$750 in hazard pay?

Answer: FTWs will receive on-call pay for their time on-call in addition to the \$750 hazard pay.

GENERAL/MISCELLANEOUS

Question: Will COVID-19 be taken into consideration for staffing allocations for FY21?

Answer: It is expected that COVID-19 will continue to have significant impacts on our personal and professional lives, likely through FY21. As such, it is possible that COVID-19 will impact FY21 staffing allocations.

Question: Can employees who have parking fees automatically deducted from their pay suspend those deductions while working from home?

Answer: Currently, DTMB is not suspending parking deductions. However, various municipalities may have a different policy. Check with the entity that owns your parking lot/facility.

Question: Do workers have to take annual leave or sick leave if they are able to complete their job tasks in less than 40 hours per week due to cases closing and the decreased number of investigations being assigned?

Answer: Staff should contact their supervisor for additional assignments or to ask if they can be of assistance in any special projects if they complete their assigned work prior to completing their scheduled work hours. Supervisors should assist staff in identifying additional projects if/when staff complete their assigned duties prior to working their full number of hours for the week. Staff may choose to use sick and annual leave when appropriate and approved.

Question: Are there any plans to assist children who are not in care but may be experiencing or witnessing domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns in their homes during the Stay Home Stay Safe order?

Answer: When CI receives a complaint alleging domestic violence, intake staff are asking the caller specific questions to determine the child's actual involvement in the domestic violence incident, the non-offending parent's access to services and/or safety planning, details regarding the level of risk of harm to the non-offending parent and children. Preliminary investigations are also conducted when a complaint alleging domestic violence is not assigned for investigation. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, if a complaint is received alleging domestic violence and it is not assigned, CI will also attempt to contact the non-offending parent to discuss service or safety needs.

MDHHS and MDE have partnered to publish an [Educator's Guide to Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Children](#). Teachers can use this guide to offer supports to families. It includes what to look for and ways to respond to families experiencing risk factors, such as substance use and mental health concerns.

MDHHS has also developed and published a [Family Wellness Guide](#) on 4/28/20 that will be broadly disseminated for caseworkers and others to support families with myriad risk factors.

Question: Do face-to-face contacts made using video conferencing during the Stay Home Stay Safe order count towards a worker or county's numbers?

Answer: Yes. Video conferencing is a permissible contact and is the preferred contact method. However, CSA is doing separate data pulls for contacts during COVID-19. The BOB and other statewide reports have not been updated to reflect this change.

Question: Has CSA been working with the UAW to address the needs and concerns of the workers?

Answer: The MDHHS Human Resources office has been in contact with the UAW regularly.

HIRING

Question: Have employment offers been rescinded for potential staff who did not begin employment prior to the Stay Home Stay Safe order?

Answer: All pending offers have been rescinded or delayed, though some processes have continued in order to make staff available when the budget allows.

Question: If staff and/or supervisors leave during this time due promotions or lateral moves, will those positions be filled?

Answer: In many cases, positions will not be filled due to current hiring freezes. Exceptions must be granted by the state budget director.

JOB SHARING/REASSIGNMENTS

Question: Due to the decrease in assigned CPS investigations and increase in requests for assistance, is it anticipated that some children's services specialists, especially those with prior experience in assistance payments, will temporarily help with the assistance payments side of MDHHS?

Answer: Civil Service rules provide latitude for reassignment of duties, which could involve services specialists supporting assistance payments functions.

Question: In some counties, CPS staff and supervisors have been largely responsible for staffing the office since most staff began working from home. Will foster care staff and supervisors be asked to share these responsibilities?

Answer: Local office operations are developed based on needs for each office and will therefore differ statewide. For clarification in your area, this question should be directed to the county director.

Question: Can services specialists in other areas who have prior experience in CPS assist with face-to-face contacts for CPS or act as an FTW?

Answer: Every local office/BSC created their FTW coverage based on their own operational needs. For clarification in your area, this question should be directed to the county director.

LAYOFF/FURLOUGH

Question: With the number of complaints and investigations decreasing, will new hires who have not completed training and are not eligible for a full caseload be laid off?

Answer: We do not have any information on layoffs beyond what was already communicated regarding the 10-day temporary layoffs.

Question: Will there be furlough days now or in the future?

Answer: As of 4/29/20, no information has been received regarding furlough days.

Question: Will there be additional temporary or permanent layoffs?

Answer: As of 4/29/20, no additional information has been provided beyond the previously communicated 10-day temporary layoffs.

Question: Can I volunteer to work in payments as opposed to being laid off?

Answer: There may be an ability to volunteer in other areas, but it is unclear how that would impact future layoffs.

MOBILE WORKFORCE

Question: How long will MDHHS staff be working from home?

Answer: MDHHS is continuing to assess when staff will be able to return to their regular work locations. Decisions will be based on Executive Order directives, public health guidance and assessment of the ability to keep staff safe and healthy.

Question: Has there been consideration for moving towards a more mobile workforce after the COVID-19 pandemic is over?

Answer: MDHHS is continuing to assess this area.

PERSONAL PROTECTION SUPPLIES

Question: When can the field expect to see personal protection equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, and sanitizer?

Answer: FTWs have been provided the appropriate PPE. If you are in the office or must go out into the field, you may request PPE from your direct supervisor/local office director.

STAFF CURRENTLY WORKING AT MDHHS OFFICES

Question: Why are some managers required to be in the office when most of the staff have been asked to work from home?

Answer: There must be appropriate coverage in the office to address any in-office operational needs and/or to assist any customers that may come to the office for CSA issues.

Question: Are offices being cleaned daily to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among the staff still reporting to local offices?

Answer: Cleaning in offices has been increased to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Question: Will staff and supervisors who are not making face-to-face contacts, but are still being required to report to the office and risk exposure to COVID-19, qualify for hazard pay?

Answer: The COVID-19 hazard premium only applies to individuals exempt from the FFCRA. Individuals that are coming into the office are not in this group, unless they are an FTW.

TIME USAGE & COVID-19 PAY

Question: Are NEREs allowed to use the 80 hours of emergency sick leave under FFCRA?

Answer: Yes, unless they are exempt as an FTW.

Question: Do staff have to use 80 hours of regular sick leave (SKLV) before using the emergency sick leave under FFCRA?

Answer: No.

Question: Can school/community leave hours (SCHL) be used if staff are working remotely while engaging their children in educational activities as directed by their child(ren)'s school(s)?

Answer: The Civil Service Regulation governing school and community leave has not changed. At this time, it does not cover educating a child at home; however, this has been identified as an area for potential changes in the future.

Question: If I had to use my regular sick leave (SKLV) to self-quarantine under the direction of my doctor due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 before the 80 hours of COVID leave was put in place, can I retroactively use the COVID leave and get my regular sick leave back?

Answer: Leaves under FFCRA are not able to be applied retroactively prior to when they became available.

WORK LOGS/DAILY REPORTS/SACWIS/RANDOM MOMENT STUDY

Question: Are all local office children's services staff across the state required to complete worklogs in 30-minute increments?

Answer: Verification of work activity and the completion of worklogs is a local office management decision. There is no universal expectation, though each local office should have a process in place to ensure all work is being completed timely.

Question: Are workers required to upload documents in MiSACWIS while working from home?

Answer: Documents should be uploaded into MiSACWIS by use of technology available to them during the time they are working remote. If workers need assistance in this area or are experiencing barriers in meeting this expectation, they should consult with their direct supervisor.

Question: Will changes in the budget due to COVID-19 delay CCWIS implementation and the phasing out of MiSACWIS?

Answer: Yes, the CCWIS funding was removed from the governor's budget which means that we are no longer able to move forward with the CCWIS project until funding is approved.